

## Letter from Alexander Graham Bell to Eliza Symonds Bell, August 18, 1875, with transcript

(Copy) 15 Salem, Mass. August 18th, 1875. Dear Mama:

Nearly two months ago I wrote an important and confidential letter to you and Papa informing you of the attachment I had formed for my dear pupil Mabel Hubbard — and of my intention to ask her to be my wife. I also told you afterwards of the kind reception I had met with from her parents, and I requested you and papa to assure me that that what I had said would be received as a confidence from a son to his parents.

I knew that the sacredness of a letter was too often overlooked at home. I felt that there was a tendency there to consider letters too much as family property — instead of being considered as sacred to the individuals to whom they were addressed — and I feared that what I had said to you in confidence might be divulged to Uncle-&-his-family others prematurely.

My special object in requesting this assurance was that I might feel certain that Papa had received my communication in a kinder spirit than he had shown on a former occasion. I had long been grieved that there was so little confidence and sympathy between us — and I stated that his assurance that my communication on this subject would-be-treated had been accepted as a confidence by him — and not as a subject for ridicule -would do much to restore-the-proper relation-between-us-as-parent-and-son- bring us nearer.

I wrote from deep feeling — and I am sure that I said enough to show my sincere wish that such-relations-should-be-re-established - there should be more confidence between us.

What has been the result!

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You have alluded — and barely alluded — to the matter. You have spoken of Mabel as if I had called her a “deaf-mute.”

15a You would be justly hurt and indignant were any one to allude to you in that way, and certainly so would she. However — of course you do not *know* her — and I pass that by. But what has been Papa's reply been to my communication- (which had special relation-to-him reference to his affection & sympathy!)

He has treated it with entire silence as if the matter were not worth alluding to at all. The only communication I have received from him consisted of a Postal Card — dated on his marriage-day — a day of all others when he should have had some sympathy with me in the matter — but no allusion even was made to it.

You and he should know that such a subject as that — is — to a young man — of the deepest and most vital importance.

The step I proposed taking — was to affect my whole after life , and I feel that my communication deserved to be treated with more consideration than has been shown it. I have felt so indignant at the way in-which it has been received — that I have not written since — for I feared that I might say things that would seem undutiful in a son. I had made up my mind neither to write to you — nor to visit home again — until some proper notice had been taken of my communication request.

Last night however, in a conversation with Mrs. Hubbard, she happened to allude to you. She asked what my-parents you and papa had said about the matter. I told her that I had written to you both informing you both — of the step I was about to take — even before I had spoken to her. I said that I had felt hurt at the little- reference-that-had-been-made-to-the-matter notice taken — and that I had not written since.

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I said that I knew beforehand that both you and papa would be sorry to hear that I had formed an attachment for one who was deaf — but, that I had considered myself old enough to judge-for-myself-in act independently in the matter.

I said that I presumed you were offended that I had not consulted your wishes but — whatever-was-the-cause-of-the-silence---I-felt-that-my-communication 15b deserved-some-better-reply- That-I-was-waiting-for-it---and-that-I-should-not-write-again-until-it-and-the-others-had-been-answered- that I considered my communication as at least deserving of a reply — whatever you may have thought of it. I stated that I was waiting for it — and that I had made up my mind not to write again until some sort of answer had been returned.

Mrs. Hubbard pleaded very earnestly for you. She-said She knew what a mother's heart was. — That I was your only child. — That-you-would-certainly- She was certain you would sympathize with Mabel — for as you were deaf yourself.- In fact she urged me so earnestly that (even if I did feel hurt) — I-should - to write kindly to my own mother — that I pen this note to you that you may know at all-events least know the cause of my silence.

I fear I-do-not-write-very-kindly---my-letter-may-not-seem-very-kind-I-am-not-kind - I do not write kindly — but I can write send no more dutiful a letter than this.

Should this also be received with the same shameful neglect as my last — I feel that there is danger of a complete alienation of my affections from home.

Your loving son Aleck. Mrs. A. Melville Bell, Brantford, Ont.